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ABSTRACT

Student personnel professionals need to re-orient their perspectives regarding traditional higher education philosophy, to seek out new action-oriented involvement in a broader realm of human development and to define new roles for themselves within lifelong learning. The first realm of involvement suggests modification and/or addition of student services for the adult, nontraditional learner. The second realm examines potential linkages between student affairs profession and the division of continuing education. The third realm suggests potential entrepreneurial efforts of student affairs professionals within the larger community directly serving lifelong learners. (Author)

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STUDENT PERSONNEL PROFESSIONALS AS CONTINUING EDUCATORS

The theme of this conference, "Revitalization: Professional and Political Assertiveness," suggests that the student affairs profession is in danger of becoming static. Some believe that your professional longevity may have become a focused tunnel of responsibility, a special set of ruts and a maze of activities that are leading into cycles of myopic activity. Although I am not suggesting that student affairs professionals are "ostriches" in an underground reactive stance, I do believe that often by the nature of the profession, student affairs professionals become intently focused on the immediate and present crisis. They fail to take the time to sit back, contemplate, and consider the future for themselves, their profession and their educational institutions.

This presentation will focus upon a burgeoning population in higher education and in our society--The Adult Learner. Why should supportive services look beyond our 18-22 year old audience? Why should the Student Affairs Professional serve this older adult group and how can they, both inside and outside the educational system, provide skill development for this older group and professional development for themselves? These are the issues that will be considered.

Does Life Continue After 21?

Does life continue after twenty one? Of course, we know it does by our own experiences. But often many higher educational institutions assume that undergraduate education is only for the 18-21 year old. In

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graduate preparation training programs of student personnel, the key focus was and is on the young adult, the post-adolescent, the typical freshman through senior years. Even in recent times, the Student Development Model of the T.H.E. project has been theoretically developed and applied in the assumption that student development specialists work solely with 18 to 21 year old students.

In a 1961 survey conducted by the Association of University and Evening Colleges, over 50% of their member institutions reported that no student over twenty-five years of age was allowed in these day academic programs (DeCrow, 1962). Today, opportunities for access are better for the adult. However, in a recent nationwide survey by the Educational Testing Service, 17% of the responding institutions stated that "adults over twenty-five were not actively encouraged or recruited to attend" (Cross, Valley, and Associates, p. 55). In examining the specific sub-sample of universities within this total survey, one of every three institutions did not encourage adults to attend their campus. If given opportunity to access the institution, most adults find programs and service totally oriented to the younger population. The adult population, that is those older than the traditional undergraduate students, are facing both overt and covert discrimination. In many ways, undergraduate higher education does assume that learning ends at 21. As pointedly stated by Ernest Boyer, "older students are like misfits in a strange and foreign land, viewed as retreads in a kind of salvage operation, sadly out of step with the learning cycle and even with the life cycle itself" (Boyer, 1974, p. 6).

Trends in Our Society

In looking at the future of the profession and higher education, we need to take a macrocosmic view of the projected changes in our society. These significant changes in population demographics will have dramatic impact upon the role and existence of student affairs efforts in the next twenty years.

Beginning with the year 1980, the 15 to 24 years age group will begin to diminish in size. Its level of representation will decline by 7 million in 1990 at its lowest point, and slowly rise up to almost the 1980 level in the year 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975). During this same period from 1980 to 2000, the 25-44 year age group will grow by 17 million with a slight drop in the year 2000. The 45-64 age group will grow by 15 million and the 65 and above age group will gain 6 million more members (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975) (note Figure A).

From these figures, it is obvious that the present stage of traditional undergraduate education will face diminished enrollments, cutbacks of staff and faculty and possibly the elimination of institutions. At present we are viewing a few of the beginning ripples of this change. As noted by the Chronicle of Higher Education (January 9, 1978), in its comparison of opening fall enrollments in 1975 through 1977, there is a decline of 4.3% in enrollment for first-time students at publicly controlled institutions.

One positive note in these alarming projections is the growth of the older than average student undergraduate population. Of the present undergraduate population, 25% of the total numbers are students 25 years and

Figure A

U.S. POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS, 1900 - 2000

Year	U.S. Population[a] (In thousands)					
		Age				
	Total	Under 15	15-24	25-44	45-64	65+
1900	76,147	26,147	14,951	21,434	10,463	3,099
1910	92,407	29,621	18,212	27,033	13,555	3,986
1920	106,461	33,789	18,821	31,798	17,124	4,929
1930	123,077	36,003	22,487	36,309	21,573	6,705
1940	132,122	32,942	24,033	39,868	26,249	9,031
1950	152,271	40,998	22,355	45,673	30,849	12,397
1960	180,671	56,076	24,576	47,140	36,203	16,675
1965	194,303	59,251	30,773	46,912	38,916	18,451
1970	204,879	57,889	36,495	48,435	41,974	20,085
1971	207,045	57,526	37,810	48,809	42,413	20,487
1972	208,842	56,717	38,203	50,250	42,789	20,883
1973	210,404	55,697	38,882	51,412	43,084	21,329
1974	211,909	54,615	39,557	52,593	43,328	21,815
	Projections[b]					
1975	213,450	53,642	40,229	53,722	43,527	22,330
1976	215,074	52,711	40,832	55,100	53,656	22,775
1977	216,814	51,983	41,248	56,674	43,703	23,204
1978	218,678	51,484	41,516	58,299	43,727	23,652
1979	220,663	51,184	41,628	60,066	43,701	24,085
1980	222,769	51,202	41,497	61,859	43,687	24,523
1985	234,068	53,891	38,496	71,178	43,843	26,659
1990	245,075	58,089	34,754	77,607	45,692	28,933
1995	254,495	59,997	34,921	78,292	50,977	30,307
2000	262,494	58,563	38,844	75,809	58,679	30,600

older (U.S. Bureau of the Census, October, 1974). That is translated into 2 million adult learners within the 8 million undergraduate group and a 40% increase in the older student representation over the past 27 years. It is also important to note that as of 1976, over 50% of the community college population were 25 years of age or older. If one looks beyond the university enrollments, there is also an identified 15.3 million adult learners not involved in a formal college degree program (Cross, Valley and Associates, 1974).

Thus, if Student Personnel Professionals can broaden themselves beyond the context of a traditional higher education degree undergraduate program, they can serve the student who desires to re-enter the job market, who desires to find a new growth and challenge, who desires to make a significant career change or who needs to fulfill mandatory continuing education requirements. As educators concerned about the affective and cognitive development of students, you can serve far greater numbers who are on the periphery of the undergraduate institution, yet intimately involved with the learning process as part of the human development process.

Expanding Our Professional Horizons

Lifelong learning has become the key phrase to describe this new focus on educational opportunity for all people. It represents a new thrust and new orientation to the sequencing of life in terms of work, education, leisure and retirement. As an integral part of the education process, student affairs professionals need to incorporate this rather diverse group

of older students by modifying existing ideas, philosophy and action in their work settings. Secondly, as educators with human relation skills, training in human development principles and a professional commitment to maximizing human potential, student affairs professionals are likely candidates to provide expertise to a group who desire and need it.

Thus, I am suggesting to you to become a "continuing student affairs educator." Yes, let's redefine the terms of student and student services. Is not a student, one who is pursuing knowledge? Up to this point, the profession acts upon the definition of a student as a person of 18 to 21 years of age who is pursuing an undergraduate credit degree program often on a full-time basis. Let's look beyond this definition to a far greater number of people who fit into the "nontraditional students" category by age, course hours, and degree programs, who may both interface with you directly and indirectly.

First Realm of Professional Outreach-- Changing Your Service Outreach

In this new continuing learner approach, there are three broad areas of action. The first area is oriented to the services that are presently offered within an undergraduate institution and need to be reshaped to incorporate the needs and desires of the older undergraduate student. First and foremost, student affairs programs should readjust their supportive services to allow for the access of the late afternoon and evening student, the part-time student, and the mature student. Many institutions have already defined their mission to recruit this group and to change their institution to meet the lifestyle needs of this older returning

student population. Several institutions have also noted the unique problems of the re-entry of the returning woman student and have provided special programs. But, these institutions are by far in the minority. Can you imagine what it is like to look at a college application at 40 years of age, to take the SAT, attend a typical orientation program, register for classes. We lose many adults because of the barriers and prejudices of our programs and services.

What are the key supportive services which need to be changed within student affairs programs? In reviewing various research, the key support services for the older adult include:

1) Orientation program · Older students prefer a separate program of orientation from traditional younger students. Offered at a convenient time for these students, the program should be structured to develop a group identity and deal with the unique issues of an older adult coming back to school. Issues to be addressed should include:

a) Am I too old for this?

b) How do I get back into good study habits and reading/math/writing skills?

c) Will I be able to compete with younger students on tests?

d) How do I manage my time with a family and/or job and/or my community involvements?

e) Is there anyone else like me here at the University? Did they succeed?

f) What are the courses and the procedures in this program? What are the rules of the game?

g) How can I clarify my career goals?

Several unique orientation programs for older returning students do incorporate these elements with significant success in the adjustment and establishment of confidence. A few programs have experimented with a family night in which the family of the student is also oriented to the return of their family member to the college or university. With several returning women student programs, this approach proved to be most valuable.

2) Academic advisement · For the adult student, this service is of major importance. In my research of older and younger undergraduate students, significant numbers of both groups utilized and felt they needed academic advisement in relation to other supportive services.

	Usage	Significant Need	Moderate Need
Younger student	89.2%	58.8%	26.9%
Older student	79.8%	42.3%	26.9%

These nontraditional students need the special attention and assistance in streamlining a program that fits their interests, needs and their schedules. Academic advisers for the older student often are the crucial linkage between the student and the institution and often are the one service to provide the majority of counseling and advising for the older student. In the Geisler and Thrush study, they found that returning women students made greater usage of academic department advisors for guidance and counseling than they did of the specialized counseling and guidance services offered on campus. Although there was a variety of specialty services provided, these returning students chose the academic adviser to assist them in coping with and clarifying many aspects of their student survival (Geisler and Thrush, 1975).

3) Skill development and remedial services · These concerns are pointed out as a specialty service of significant importance to the initial success and ability to function effectively by the returning older student. Returning adult students fear they lack the skills to be in a healthy competition with younger students. In research of these two groups (Kasworm, 1977), older adults utilized tutoring services in higher numbers than did younger students. However, they made minimal usage of remedial courses in which they were grouped with younger students and which were offered during day time hours.

	Study skills courses	Tutoring	Remedial courses
Younger student	6.7	20.8	16.7
Older student	1.9	22.1	4.8

Hanson and Lenning also point out the significant value of these skill development services and the importance that they be geared to the older student.

4) Career counseling and placement activities · Unlike younger students, our continuing adult student population face special difficulties in defining career goals and job selection due to lack of prior employment or a shift in career patterns. Most suspect they will face age discrimination, and some wonder if they will be "employable in any profession." In comparing the usage of career/vocational and job placement services older students need greater access and show greater usage than younger students (Kasworm, 1977).

	Career/voc. counseling	Job Placement
Younger students	17.5	20.2
Older students	18.4	22.1

5) Financial aids · This service is always a critical element in the return of students. Beyond the Veterans Benefits programs, financial aids assistance have proven to be one of the more difficult areas for the older student. Most financial aids offices assume that they should not provide assistance to "independent" students or students who are older than average. Loan programs and other forms of financial assistance need to be defined in terms of these students. Further, there are other forms of support assistance for these students not available to the traditional students and which are usually not advertised. Did you know that there are over three national scholarship programs available for the older returning woman? In addition, many business and industrial concerns offer tuition repayment plans to their employees.

6) Child care services or a service to locate appropriate care is another invaluable and often necessary aid. In a study by Geisler and Thrush at the University of Wisconsin, they found 25% of the women returning to college felt that their attendance was largely dependent upon available child care services.

7) Identity base · Lastly, most older students desire a designated staff person or a specialty office which is their contact for information, referral and guidance. They desire to have a specific staff member who is aware, sensitive and helpful to them. My research and interviews with older students point to their desire for a staff person who is a combined functional

counselor, adviser and ombudsman. Returning students dislike being treated like a misfit, they don't wish to be handed from one staff member to the next. Further, they require a point of contact for an identity within the larger university and in particular with other older students. For many campuses, an older student organization has been the psychological/ sociological answer. At the University of Texas at Austin, SOTA, Students Older than Average, offer sandwich seminars, Friday afternoon TGIF gatherings and once-a-month pot-luck suppers. Whatever the nature of the campus situation, older students do need to have some form of a staff person, a designated office or a gathering catalyst.

Of course, there are other services and other ways to modify these services to meet the older student population. However, given these greater concerns, I feel you can utilize your own resources and investigate your own older students' needs by expanding the concept of student and student services.

Second Realm of Professional Outreach--
Linkage with Continuing Education

Up to this point, we have focused on the expansion of your present role within the undergraduate institution. I now wish to re-orient you to life-long learning and how you can provide your unique expertise to consult, train and counsel adults in linkage with your division of continuing education or community services program.

The Division of Continuing Education or Community Service or Public Service at your institution should be perceived as an academic unit that is oriented to serving the whole community. Just as in the early 1800's of undergraduate education, the vast majority of these continuing education programs are solely oriented to the academic/educational thrust. They do

not attempt to provide any supportive and co-curricular services for the holistic development of the continuing education student. Further their resources in the program are so limited that they do not consider counseling and advising a significant service. They are primarily focused on a quality learning project with financial success. They have no backup funding, so that all outreach efforts must be self-supporting.

At this time, people within continuing education, lead by the book Patterns of Lifelong Learning, are beginning to speak to the imperative need for development of supportive services. Continuing Educators are beginning to see value in offering services which aid the adult student in maximizing and coordinating the learning experiences. In your capacity as a student affairs professional, you could offer your expertise to this group, by helping them to recognize, organize and provide an impact to the adult population. Several schools have evolved unique methods to serve the adult populations. Several large night schools run their programs and staff from 4 to 10 at night. The Graduate School of the USDA offers both credit and noncredit career and personal development courses which in effect provide the services needed by the returning student. The University of Georgia, Georgia Center for Continuing Education, has a half time staff member who offers advisement and counseling to the evening school and independent study student population. Western Michigan University utilizes doctoral counseling students as counselors in their continuing education program. External degree populations including Empire State College in New York have evolved special units to provide initial in-take, assessment, counseling and advisement as a component of the external degree. Although the variations are numerous, the central theme is that returning adult students do need and

desire counseling/advising service. Your expertise and interest and vision will prove valuable to these units. In essence, you could help create a mini-student affairs unit to serve the community adult population drawn to your institution's continuing education program.

Within the Division of Continuing Education, there are units which develop and offer special training programs, short-term workshops and specialty courses. Aspects of these programs could be open to your expertise as a teacher/trainer. By the very nature of the student affairs profession, human development and management skills are significant facets of your expertise. Further, most student affairs professionals are continuously involved with the training and professional development of students and staff. Thus, they and you have both the teaching techniques and content knowledge to offer.

What specific areas could be suggested as specialty courses for you to teach? Please take a few moments and list your skills and training. The potential list could include: human relations skills, communications skills, group process skills, counseling techniques, leadership skills, assertive training, decision-making, career planning, management organization, time-management techniques, M.B.O. and others. These skills, in concert with sound teaching principles, a needs assessment of your target group, and a knowledge of the adult learner, can place you in a position of educating the "continuing learner" outside the formal credit structure. At this time, I know of at least 10 student affairs professionals who are offering courses to business and industry, community leadership groups, social service agencies, and helping professionals through their institutional Division of

Continuing Education. Their topics are as general as communication skills and decision making techniques to the very specific interests in divorce adjustment groups and biofeedback for tension relief. They offer their expertise within workshops funded by grant projects, professional continuing education programs, or evening community service courses to interested community attenders. As a first step to your foot into the door, I suggest contacting the director of the community service program. You can discuss your interest and expertise and define an appropriate course offering. Your credibility and value will be proven after the first course completion. Adult participants want their money's worth. They demand a quality product in an efficient and effective format. If you are inept with the course the first time, you've lost your audience and your entree into the continuing education program. If you have been successful, your credibility and acceptance is evidence and proof to the continuing education division of your future value to them.

Thus, if you wish to expand your role beyond the traditional functioning of undergraduates, do investigate your continuing education program, and other programs in your community. From my perspective, these are fertile grounds for your future involvement (note Figure B).

Third Realm--
Professional Entrepreneurial Efforts

For those of you who wish either to explore new opportunities for additional after-hours employment or full-time entrepreneurial efforts, student personnel professionals can bring their expertise to lifelong learners who both need and will pay for specialized assistance. These opportunities could include such areas as the development of a career

FIGURE B

ADULT LIFE CYCLE TASKS/ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAM RESPONSE

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assessment and planning center for the community. This center would offer specialized professional counseling to the adult who seeks information regarding a first career or a mid-career change. This service could also be quite viable to certain business and industrial concerns. Another opportunity is focused on various community and professional clientele groups who would contract with you directly for training services as opposed to utilizing the continuing education program of your institution for services. Thus, many state agencies, as a prime example, contract training for such basic skill development courses, as assertive training, career decision-making, communication techniques, leadership development, and time management. One group of individuals at the University of Texas at Austin has developed a private training firm. This firm includes several student affairs professionals who conduct workshops with various business and state agency groups. One member of this group is paid by the group on a half-time basis to solicit contracts, write grants, etc. to elicit business. They found that although it was a slow beginning, their training became known as a quality product and therefore they receive more attention and further employment opportunities.

Thus, entrepreneurial efforts are high risk-taking activities, but can be quite valuable alternatives for those interested in pursuing continuing education activities as a professional job.

Summary

We have looked at our changing society, undergraduate institutions, and the concept of lifelong learning. I have suggested new roles for you within the area of student affairs, the division of continuing education

and within the larger community. It is up to you, your talents and interests, and your commitment to become a continuing educator.

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